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APR/MAY 2009 • No. 98

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Mini Food, Big Rewards

From bite-size muffins to sliders, little is a big trend. Nutritionist **Ellie Krieger** thinks cooking and eating small is a smart thing.

THE OTHER DAY MY FRIEND WAS lamenting how much she misses bagels, especially just-baked ones—still warm, soft, and dense inside, crisp and chewy outside. Amazingly, she manages to resist them, sticking to her resolution to cut down on carbs. But it takes all her will power, and she feels deprived. When I mentioned that our local bagel store bakes fresh mini bagels, she jumped up and hugged me. Going mini is the perfect way for her to have her bagel and not overeat it, too.

Maybe that's why small is so big these days. It's the best way to eat what you crave without putting too much of a dent in your diet. Plus, there's something whimsical and fun about scaled-down versions of favorite foods. Who doesn't feel like a child when eating silver dollar pancakes? It's no wonder mini is everywhere—from the supermarket, with bite-size and mini pack versions of cookies, crackers, and candies, to restaurants, where sliders have slid on to every menu.

The irony is that typical serving sizes have gotten so out of hand that what's considered mini today is about the same as our grandparents' standard portion. That mini bagel my friend ran out to buy is just a tad smaller than the 3-inch bagel of 20 years ago.

So when you're out and about, ordering mini can be a great trick for beating portion distortion. And at home, going small is one way of having it all: enjoying indulgent, rich treats while staying healthy and balanced. It's instant portion control.

It can be as simple as cutting your tray of brownies into two-bite squares or using mini muffin tins to create the perfect party-size muffins or cupcakes. That way, each one is not as much an indulgence as a sweet amusement. Same goes for the tiny ice cream sandwiches I like to make with just a couple of tablespoons of ice cream between two vanilla wafer cookies. On the savory side, I use muffin tins for mini quiches or mac-and-cheese bites. And burgers and pizzas are even more fun when they're downsized. The trick—and this is crucial—is to eat just one or two instead of popping them like grapes.

Mini pizzas are a perennial favorite at my house. Their goodness—and wholesomeness—



In Ellie's kitchen, pizza gets a mini makeover.

builds from the base up, starting with a whole wheat crust (the dough is available frozen at most grocery stores). I douse the pizzas with an easy, fresh tomato sauce and then top them with a gorgeous pile of arugula, which wilts perfectly as the pizzas cook, and a few strips of sweet roasted peppers (both vegetables are powerhouses of vitamins and antioxidants). A little prosciutto sprinkled on top gives them

rich flavor, while just the right amount of cheese lends a melty finish. The result is fresh, colorful, and scrumptious. And the best part is that these pizzas are so small, you get to eat three.

I love how something as simple as downsizing your favorite foods allows you to have everything you want while keeping portions in check and eating more healthfully. That's a big payoff.



good to know

- Whole wheat pizza dough is more nutritious and better for you (think more antioxidants and fiber) than white pizza dough.
- More vegetables than meat plus a fresh, homemade tomato sauce keep this pizza light and healthy.
- Three of these mini pizzas are as satisfying as two big slices of meat pizza, but with 100 fewer calories.

mini pizzas with arugula, peppers, and prosciutto

You can find pizza dough at many supermarkets. If you have to buy more than the $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. needed for this recipe, you can freeze the leftover dough.

Yields 12 mini pizzas;
serves 4 as a main course

- 5 tsp. extra-virgin olive oil
- $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. pizza dough, preferably whole wheat, thawed if frozen
- 1 14½-oz. can whole tomatoes, drained
- 1 tsp. dried oregano
- 1 large clove garlic, chopped
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 2 cups lightly packed arugula, chopped
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup thinly sliced roasted red peppers (rinsed if jarred)
- 1½ oz. thinly sliced prosciutto di Parma, cut into thin strips (about $\frac{1}{2}$ cup)
- 1 cup grated part-skim mozzarella
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano
- Crushed red pepper flakes (optional)

Lightly coat a large bowl with 1 tsp. of the oil. Put the dough in the bowl, cover loosely, and let sit at room temperature until supple and relaxed, 45 minutes to 1 hour.

Position racks in the top and bottom thirds of the oven and heat the oven to 475°F. Meanwhile, put the tomatoes, oregano, garlic, 2 tsp. of the oil, and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. each salt and pepper in a food processor; pulse to make a chunky sauce.

Lightly oil 2 baking sheets with the remaining 2 tsp. oil. Divide the dough into quarters. Divide each quarter into 3 equal parts; you'll have twelve 1-oz. pieces of dough. (Alternatively, use a scale to divide the dough.) Shape each piece of dough into a 3-inch round and put on the baking sheets.

Spread about 1 scant Tbs. of the sauce over each dough round, leaving a little border around the edge for the crust. Top each with a mound of arugula, then some strips of pepper and prosciutto. Sprinkle the mozzarella and Parmigiano on top.

Bake until the cheese is bubbling and the crust is browned, 12 to 14 minutes, rotating and swapping the pans' positions about halfway through for even baking. Sprinkle with crushed red pepper flakes (if using) and serve.

Registered dietician Ellie Kreiger is a Fine Cooking contributing editor.